

Enotourism as a Form of Activating Rural Areas (On the Basis of the Province of Podkarpackie)

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This study encompasses selected issues connected with the development of wine tourism in the province of Podkarpackie. Its development is based on wine production which has been of greater and greater importance in Poland. Wine tourism defined as enotourism provides the opportunities of local development, especially for the areas of natural predispositions to wine making. The example of such a region is the province of Podkarpackie, which has been playing a significant role in the revival of Polish contemporary wine making. In recent years, many initiatives been observed, including marketing ones, stimulating development of enotourism in the studied region.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism as a dynamic phenomenon, undergoes constant transformations under many factors, including social and cultural, economic, political, natural and technological ones.

The introduced changes have caused an increase of interest in new forms of tourism which may include wine tourism in Poland defined as enotourism. This kind of tourism has been developed particularly in Western Europe, in highly developed countries in the scope of wine production and drinking (Italy, France, Spain, and Germany). In recent years, also in Poland, a growth of interest in wine making has been observed, which is mainly connected with development of wine tourism. One of the regions of high predispositions to develop enotourism is the province of podkarpackie, in which there are favourable conditions for keeping vineyards.

The aim of this study is to present the significance of development of enotourism in the context of activating rural areas on the basis of the province of Podkarpackie.

Along with the theoretical considerations, predispositions of the province of Podkarpackie to development of wine production have been presented, with a particular emphasis on connecting this form of activity with tourism. Moreover, attention has been paid at the necessity of marketing support of enotourism, identifying the examples of selected actions in this capacity.

WINE PRODUCTION AND ENOTOURISM – MUTUAL RELATIONS

The condition for proper local development relies on correlation and integrity of long term development of the economic, social and natural subsystem, having its material implications in developing and using a geographic area (Brol, 1998). In relation to the areas predisposed to development of wine making and having any experiences in this capacity, the ideal form of activity is development of enotourism.

Referring to the statement that the condition for tourism existence relies on differentiation of space (areas), C.M. Hall and co-authors (2002) emphasises that wine is presently one of the products that have names based on geographical names of their origin. As a result, there are strong connections between the location of areas for viticulture and wine production (wine regions) and development of tourism on them, which exerts an influence not only on the development of local economy but also on sustaining residents' awareness of the geographical and cultural autonomy of a given location (by aiming at preserving a specific cultural landscape, preservation of the tradition connected with cultivating, production, trade and consumption of wine etc.).

The aforementioned authors identified three stages of development of wine tourism in the context of its influence on regional development. The first phase relies on the fact that owners of particular vineyards, producers of wine and owners of wineries lack cooperation and each of them separately performs actions relying on gaining customers etc. In the second phase, it may be claimed that these are actions aimed at performing a coordinated promotion policy. However, the final stage is characterised by developed cooperation in the scope of wining customers and their servicing.

The significance that is attached to wine tourism in particular regions of viticulture may prove the fact that in Alsace around 23% of wines offered by producers are purchased by tourists and in Burgundy the share of wines purchased by tourists amounts to 12% (Cambourne, Macionis, 2002). It shall be emphasised that apart from wines, tourists also purchase other products and they take advantage of many accompanying services.

Apart from economic significance, wine tourism has also great cultural importance. From the viewpoint of regions and other locations in which grapevines is cultivated, interest of tourists in wine and wine making allows for preservation of tradition and its habits. Tourism also forces care for tidiness and proper rural development, favouring the maintenance of durability of cultural landscape. In order to make the tourists' stay more attractive, interesting events are organised, pertaining to local traditions, customs and old recipes. It is mainly connected with the period of grapevine harvesting, production of wine or its tasting.

SELECTED DETERMINANTS STIMULATING DEVELOPMENT OF ENOTOURISM IN THE PROVINCE OF PODKARPACIE

The province of Podkarpacie is one of the most important regions for wine making in Poland as well as it has played a crucial role in revival of contemporary Polish winery. It is a typical piedmont area; there are gentle slopes, clay soil, hot summers, sunny autumns and snowy winters, which constitute favourable conditions for viticulture.

Among vineyards of Podkarpacie, small plantations with the area of several or even several dozens of areas are dominant, whereas there is a lack of multihectare vineyards. The overall area of vineyards in the province of Podkarpacie amounts to more than 30 hectare and encompasses several average and more than hundred small and very small vineyards.

An important stage in development of wine production was the year 2004, in which the three year pilot project was commenced, known as Vineyards of Podkarpacie. This was the first initiative supporting development of wine making in contemporary Poland. Within the framework of the project more than 150 people participated in professional trainings in the scope of viticulture, wine production and winery economics. Part of them took a chance to visit small wine households in Hungary, Austria and Germany. There was also established the Winery Association of Podkarpacie Region in 2006 and now it brings together the majority of vineyards in the region.

The development of wine production in the region of Podkarpacie is closely connected with development of wine tourism. As a result, an initiative has been undertaken in order to establish the Wine Route of Podkarpacie aimed at promoting wine tourism and vastly understood wine making in the province of Podkarpacie. It is also an interesting form of promotion for the entire region of Podkarpacie, which strengthens its competitiveness in comparison to other regions of Poland. At present, the Wine Route of Podkarpacie has around 40 vineyards, in the future it is planned to enrich it by additional

touristic attractions and infrastructure. The indispensable condition for its success are professional promotion actions which mainly rely on simple forms of advertising (e.g. colourful folders) and Public Relations (e.g. organising events). A professional website also plays essential its role in this capacity. In future, it is planned to place offers of enotourist households (with the possibility of booking rooms) or a possibility of holding tastings or vineyard sightseeing. A separate section of the website would be an e-shop with wines from the region of Podkarpacie. The important form of gaining marketing information may constitute a forum thanks to which it is possible to exchange opinions, sharing experiences or ask questions. In the nearest future, it is planned to use billboarding or informative tables with the map of the Wine Route of Podkarpackie which will be placed at the entry routes to communes or towns in which vineyards are located. It is very important to visualise the promotion information along with exposing its logo (Wine Route of Podkarpackie, 2011).

Within several years, two models of wine tourism have been established, that is the European model which is clearly connected with culture tourism as well as American and Australian model, which is more connected with entertainment and trade. The common element for both wine tourism models relies on active relaxation and tourists' desire to maintain contact with nature (Kowalczyk, 2003). Similar expectations also refer to the persons visiting the region of Podkarpacie. Wine gourmets benefiting from wine tourism relies on the persons interested not only in tasting but also cultural wealth or regional cuisine. Consequently, their expectations in the scope of enotourist offers encompass willingness to gain information on a given wine, its history, producer or history of the region. The condition for satisfaction of tourists shall be subject to creating a complex marketing product whose significant elements are based on exceptional atmosphere of places and regions in which wine is made, accessibility to tourist infrastructure of proper quality, ability to take advantage of original cuisine or a range of additional services of a cultural and entertaining character allowing for nicely spending time with family and friends. Enotourism is connected with development of many accompanying services that create new workplaces, which contributes to local revival of a given entity.

SUMMARY

Podkarpacie is a typical mountainous region, with favourable climate conditions, having a rich tradition in viticulture. Consequently, the studied province is a magnificent area for wine making. Concurrently, thanks to natural and landscape values such as rich cultural heritage, the region of Podkarpacie has natural predispositions to development of tourism. In recent years, tendencies of combining these two functions have been observed, meaning development of wine tourism that constitutes one of activating form of selected communes in the province of podkarpackie.

In the light of shaping partnership relations that integrate actions of many local entities, a vital role is played by creating the conception of the wine route. It is especially useful in development of local regions which apart from natural predispositions to viticulture and wine production experience, similarly as the province of podkarpackie, social and economic difficulties. Wine tourism may constitute an alternative source of incomes not only for producers but also for the persons providing tourist services in its vast capacity.

Forms of local initiatives in the scope of development in enotourism allow for statement that in the next few years in the region of Podkarpacie, the number of vineyards will be increasing especially those which are worth visiting and which have a kind of image within Poland. In order to stimulate further development of actions in the scope of enotourism, it is indispensable to provide marketing support of tourist products especially by various promoting actions, in particular, advertising and PR. A significant role in promoting wine tourism of the studied region is played by the "Wine Route of Podkarpackie" which is aimed at moulding the tourist image of Podkarpacie in which a significant role may be played by dynamically developing enotourism.

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